

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
From: Jamesha Caldwell, Education Policy Legislative Intern
Re: SB 767: Higher Education - Admissions Process - Criminal History
Date: February 26, 2020
Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 767: Higher Education - Admissions Process - Criminal History. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

As of 2019, The Common App; one of the world's leading third-party admission application sites removed the requirement of criminal history disclosure for college applicants¹. And though that is extremely monumental given the rise of 'ban the box' legislation being passed, many post-secondary institutions in the state utilize other third-party admission application sites that still have a disclosure requirement. For many college applicants, counselors, and higher education institutions, the usage of third-party admissions application sites provides a unique, accessible, and comprehensive method for completing college applications. However, for applicants with a record of justice system involvement, the use of a third-party in the application process can have a detrimental impact on the candidate's acceptance.

For applicants with a record of justice system involvement, disclosure requirements on third-party admissions application sites create a lack of transparency, deter applicants, and increase inequity. In 2015, the Center for Community Alternatives found that **more than 66% of college applicants with justice system involvement did not complete and or submit college applications as a result of the disclosure requirement**². Many applicants revealed that disclosure-based questions produced a deterrence effect as a result of both a lack of transparency and a lack of accessible language. As a result of the deterrence effect, much of the applicant pool for post-secondary institutions depict an underlying and distorted picture of who wants to pursue higher education.

SB 767 would ensure that Maryland college applicants are included and engaged in the college application process with full transparency, reduced occurrences of barriers, and a more robust and inclusive admission process. Access to higher education is a fundamental right and all Maryland college applicants regardless of history deserve an opportunity to participate in the admissions process. For the reasons above, **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**

¹ Common App. Jen Davis. Change to Criminal History Question for 2019-2020 Application Year, August 2019.

² Center for Community Alternatives. The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions, 2015.